



The Slaying of a



In the photo at left, Vidkun Quisling (on the right) walks with German National Socialist Josef Terboven (center) appointed as Reichskommissar toward the end of April 1940 by Adolf Hitler. The German invasion of Norway and Denmark began on April 9, 1940. Though Denmark surrendered immediately, the Norwegians mounted a defense of sorts, fighting and retreating north for several weeks.

In the photo at right, King Haakon and Crown Prince Olav take refuge in a forest during the German bombing of Molde (in effect, Norway's temporary capital) in 1940.

Former Defense Minister Quisling demanded that the king abdicate, but he refused. By 1941, the king and prince had set up residence in London along with Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands, Poland's former Prime Minister Wladyslaw Sikorski, King Peter of Yugoslavia, King George II of Greece, President Benes of Czechoslovakia, Grand Duchess Charlotte of Luxembourg, Prime Minister Pierlot of Belgium and Charles de Gaulle of France. Top, a Quisling campaign poster: "With Quisling for the new Norway."



*An unsmiling
Vidkun Abraham
Lauritz Jonssen
Quisling poses in his
office as minister-
president of Norway.*



Viking

The Epic of Vidkun Quisling

By Michael McLaughlin

"A Nordic union between Scandinavia and Great Britain, with the adherence of Finland and Holland, and in which Germany and eventually the British Dominions and America might later on be absorbed, would take away the sting of any communist combination and secure European civilization and peace for the foreseeable future."

—Vidkun Quisling, *Russia and Us*, 1930

You will be my historical witness. The day will come when I will need it," said Norwegian Prime Minister Vidkun Quisling to his secretary, Franklin Knudsen. The national leader's words were spoken with great solemnity as the two men sat in a room of Oslo's Grand Hotel on the 18th of April 1940. Nine days earlier their country had fallen to the forces of the Third Reich, victims of a conspiracy masterminded by England's unelected leader Winston Churchill.

Churchill's aim, to cut Germany's essential ore lifeline, was yet another of his acts of war against a non-belligerent neutral country. The conspiracy was later exposed by his ally, Prime Minister Paul Reynard of France: "Churchill came to Paris on April 5, 1940, and at last the British government resolved that the mine fields in Norwegian territorial waters would after all be laid. The operation was, however, postponed until April 7 so Hitler could learn of it and prepare his countermove. One of the aims of the enterprise was to entrap the opponent by provoking him into making a landing in Norway."

Vidkun Quisling continued speaking: "I want a man who observes and reflects. I may tell you that in the future you are going to be the man who himself has seen and heard what is happening at this decisive moment in the history of Norway and that of the West."

Knudsen recalled those prophetic words nearly five years later when on October 24, 1945, Quisling, sleeping fitfully in his sparse cell, was aroused at 2 a.m. and taken into the bitter cold

of the prison yard at Møllergaten Jail in Oslo.

The cavalcade of limousines had rolled into the old Akershus fortress 40 minutes earlier. A volley of shots reverberated beyond the prison walls and one of Europe's most enigmatic and bravest leaders crumpled under the hail of bullets. The limousines departed. On the stone floors outside the recently vacated Cell 34B were rose petals, perhaps from one of the many bouquets handed in. On the solitary desk inside the cell with its plank bed and single blanket, the Holy Bible, its pages open, rested on the single desk. Vidkun, the son of a clergyman, was the latest in a line of eight ecclesiastical forebears in the district. It was a calling he himself was attracted to. Underlined twice in the Bible were the words: "He shall redeem their soul from defeat and violence, and precious shall their blood be in His sight." (Psalms 72-14)

It is ironic that the name of a man who was a patriot and hero without equal has become synonymous with treachery. Such is the awesome power of propaganda wielded by the victor nations.

Vidkun Quisling was born July 18, 1887 and became a man of his time whose life was orchestrated by events sweeping Europe following the Jewish-Bolshevik seizure of Russia in 1917.

In 1908 the young Norwegian had achieved an officer's position and three years later achieved the best degree ever recorded in the history of Norway's Military Academy. Such was his standing that a report was forwarded to the king of Norway

and the young lieutenant was immediately attached to the General Staff. By 1918 he was the military attaché to Petrograd and Helsingfors. Just four years later Vidkun Quisling became closely involved with Fridtjof Nansen in his charitable work under the auspices of the Relief Committee for Russia. Nansen, the internationally renowned Norwegian polar explorer, scientist and humanitarian, was the first man, with five companions, to traverse Greenland, the world's largest island. This epic adventure along with other polar expeditions achieved with his ship *Fram* (*Forward*) cannot fail to inspire.

An obvious choice due to his enormous international reputation as a humanitarian, Nansen agreed to act as the high commissioner for the League of Nations Commission for Prisoners of War. As a consequence, Vidkun Quisling's mentor was responsible for the humane repatriation of 450,000 POWs rescued from 26 countries in the aftermath of the Great War. Without question these unfortunate captives exiles would have died without Nansen's endeavors.

Leading from these humanitarian successes, the Norwegian explorer carried the extra burden of bringing relief to millions of refugees torn apart by the cataclysmic upheavals following the Jewish-Bolshevik civil wars. Having succeeded in bringing respite to the world's dispossessed, Nansen in the early 1920s was invited by the International Red Cross to direct the work required to save the lives of millions of Russians suffering from revolution, civil war and Stalin's terror famine. Nansen, assisted by Vidkun Quisling and other organizations, is estimated to have saved the lives of over 7 million people of whom 6 million were children.

In 1922 their relief program brought them to Ukraine and the Crimea. From 1924 to 1925 Quisling was in the Balkan and Donau states, on behalf of the League of Nations. In 1925 he joined Nansen again in the Near Orient and Armenia, before taking up residence in Moscow to better coordinate his tasks.

In the foreword to Nansen's narrative will be found Nansen's effusive thanks to his personal assistant, Vidkun Quisling: "These prefatory words cannot be brought to conclusion without heartfelt thanks to Captain Vidkun Quisling, for his tireless friendship as a fellow-traveler and for his valuable assistance he has rendered to the author through his comprehensive knowledge of Russia."

On June 22, 1941 Germany, supported by its anti-communist allies, preemptively attacked the Soviet Union, which had by then amassed its armies on Europe's borders prepared to invade and subjugate the continent. The invading Europeans discovered on the walls of hovels the icon portraits of both Nansen and Quisling sharing equal status with Our Lady. The spectacle of unknown Norwegians elevated to saintly status bemused but inspired the soldiers.

Norwegian front line soldiers (*frontkempere*) several times found plain plaster of paris busts of Quisling in Russia's impoverished villages. The peasants told them of the man from the far north who had once saved them from starvation. It was a memorable experience for those soldiers who had now been charged by the same man with the task of saving the people of Ukraine from a worse destiny—communist slavery.

In 1930 Quisling returned to his Norwegian homeland, which was then in the throes of communist subversion very similar to that suffered by Germany following the Great War. Communist insurgents had brought the Scandinavian country

to the very precipice of revolution. The so-called Norwegian Labor Movement was affiliated to the Communist International. Financed by Moscow, its blood-red hammer and sickle flag fluttered as its party-banner. These Sons of Moscow agitated for a "Soviet Norway," a "Soviet republic," through bloody revolution if need be.

A future prime minister bragged that soon the red flag would be hoisted above Norway's parliament while another future minister made incendiary speeches calling for revolution.

It was this same rabid revolutionary politician who was elevated to minister of (Norwegian) defense in 1935—the same who failed the opportunity to build a defense force capable of resisting Winston Churchill's sinister invasion of Norway or to resist Germany's preventive invasion.

Throughout Norway agitation was rife, strikes were organized, seditious literature was passed from hand to hand, political opponents and police were murdered, the offices of opposition parties torched, politicians intimidated, riots were organized by revolutionaries, few of whom were Norwegian nationals.

■ into this maelstrom came Vidkun Quisling, now minister of defense in the cabinet of the country's newly elected Peasants Party. Few people on earth were better qualified to recognize the danger posed to humanity by godless communism. He acted decisively to prevent Norway becoming another Soviet republic. Realizing that the final communist push was imminent with armories and military installations already targeted, Quisling immediately mobilized Norway's armed forces and police and the insurrection was quickly put down. The communists never forgave Vidkun Quisling for denying them Norway.

By April 1932, this Norwegian patriot was able to stand in his country's parliament and publicly expose the treacherous activities of the international revolution directed by Moscow.

Moving on and whilst conceding the laudable aims (working class enfranchisement) of Norway's labor movement, in a speech regarded as one of his finest, the Norwegian minister of defense shamed the red front movement for being foreign financed and guided by Marxist principles with the single aim of class-war and revolution.

Quisling had a keen understanding of world order and was a recognized political philosopher. Much of Quisling's analysis and many of his statements influenced and contributed to the ideology of Italy's emerging Benito Mussolini whose new fascism was successfully creating the corporate state. Such was the success of fascism that even Churchill conceded: "Of Italian fascism, Italy has shown that there is a way of fighting the subversive forces which can rally the masses of the people, properly led, to value and wish to defend the honor and stability of civilized society. Hereafter no great nation will be unprovided with an ultimate means of protection against the cancerous growth of Bolshevism."

As a philosopher about whom few records remain, Vidkun Quisling put forward a revolutionary thesis to provide for a system of "universalism." It called for a new world order based on a "groundwork of religion and morals as well as statecraft and science." He saw this as the essential building block of a world community based on the complementary values of race, a "constitution" of religion, statecraft, science and morals. The manuscript, as far as this author knows, is still hidden away in an Oslo vault.

Quisling set about carving his niche as a politician and in

the same year wrote his book, *Russia and Us*, the most stringent analysis of Soviet affairs ever to appear in the Norwegian language. Increasingly Quisling attracted the fury of Norway's red agitators, those ruthless revolutionaries he had so recently bettered during his term as Norway's minister of defense.

On May 17, 1933, the Independence Day of Norway and the same year in which the German people elected Adolf Hitler as their country's leader, the Norwegian leader formed his own political party, the *Nasjonal Samling* (National Unification).

His opponents sought in vain to libel and slander the patriotic newcomer but there was no flaw in the party leader's *curriculum vitae*. His popularity and patriotism were without question and his impeachments of the hard men of the left had by now been endorsed by two-thirds of the Norwegian parliament.

Nasjonal Samling's leader, inspired by the Elysian ambitions of Nansen, sought to unify the Norwegian people under a program of reconstruction based on social equality. As in Britain today, Norway had become separated from the basics of life and was drowning in political expediency, social engineering, pornography, decadence, racial debasement and political correctness gone mad.

Such was the extent of the red terror that *Nasjonal Samling*, as with anti-communist organizations throughout Europe, found it necessary to organize a defensive ring. Throughout Norway over 500 well-disciplined men were selected to form the "hird" defense force. In highly mobile detachments they placed themselves wherever needed, protecting *Nasjonal Samling* meetings, rallies, marches and political campaigning activities. Inevitably there were wounded on both sides of the conflict.

With the exception of the stable and prosperous National Socialist Germany, Europe was in turmoil. Britain and France, whose preferential trade agreements were threatened by German competition, urged on by international Jewish interests, were blockading German products and threatening war.

Poland, backed by England, was constantly attacking Germany's borders whilst Czechoslovakia on Germany's eastern border had treacherously allowed the Soviet Union the use of its military airfields aimed at Germany's heart. Throughout the world and, in particular, in Europe, the Soviet Union was agitating for world revolution. Menacingly it was poised to overthrow Romania and its oilfields, thus grabbing Germany by the jugular. In northern Europe tiny Finland was desperately fighting to stem Soviet aggression (the Winter War). Overrun by overwhelming odds they failed and the hardy Finns surrendered (March 6, 1940) much of their country. Despite the capitulation they bravely fought on and an army of farmers brought the Red Army to a grinding halt. Their success against Stalin's armed might outraged Winston Churchill. The English autocrat soon sought revenge for Stalin's humiliation and finally got it on December 7, 1941, when England declared war on Finland. Simultaneously England declared war on Hungary and Romania.

Spain was in the grip of civil war in which General Franco was mobilizing sufficient forces to (eventually) hurl Moscow's cuckoo out of the Madrid nest. In Norway, Quisling took the field against the Soviet-inspired camarilla that was aiming to embrace the whole of Europe in a gigantic pair of pincers with one



A boy looks at King Haakon VII's monogram, which has been painted on this wall in Drammen, Norway, in this 1941 photo. The Norwegian word "leve" means "live." The king had become a symbol of resistance to the German occupation of Norway. Born in 1872, Haakon was king of Norway from 1905 to his death in 1957. The rest of the royal family took shelter in the United States, while the king and crown prince spent the war years in Britain.

of its claws in Scandinavia and the other in Spain. Europe was in mortal danger. Few were better qualified to act than was Vidkun Quisling. He knew the Soviet plans as well as they themselves did. He could follow the Soviet strategy step by step toward its final goal of world domination.

Quisling had already met Leon Trotsky—the alias of Lev Davidovitsj Bronstein, an American revolutionary Jew—and knew his view of world revolution. He had also met leaders of the "Russian" revolution in the Caucasus and the Ukraine, the Danube deltas and in Moscow itself.

Although a combination of diplomacy, realpolitik and censorship hid the Soviet revolutionary aims from the masses of western Europe, Quisling was one of those sufficiently enlightened to identify and thwart the communist threat. This is a fact for which every single Briton owes a debt to Quisling.

Hardly surprisingly, the *Nasjonal Samling*'s slogan was: "Norway neutral—Norway prepared." It was a slogan detested by the saber-rattling Winston Churchill who was already planning the violation of Norway's neutrality as part of his strategy to deny ore to National Socialist Germany. Vidkun Quisling was proving to be an adept prophet in the militaristic maneuvering of those countries that sought any excuse for war.

There was hardly a communist cell, act of entryism, conspiracy or fifth-columnist front in Europe that Quisling did not know about. His base was Norway but his heart was for the security of Europe. His two principal aims were to stop the Marxists in Norway and to bring unity to the anti-communist reaction throughout Europe. In fact, up until Hitler's election when communism in Germany was dealt with root and branch, Quisling was concerned that the Weimar regime, in defiance of the Versailles Treaty terms, had assisted communist Russia's aggressive intentions toward Britain and her empire. This was

yet another reason for Britons to reflect on the debt they owe to the Norwegian patriot.

Quisling's party urged adequate defenses to maintain Norway's neutrality from wherever it was threatened. The real traitors, Norway's communists, especially after 1935 when the red-front Labour Party came to power, campaigned for disarmament and in the event of war, a general strike and the laying down of arms. This was precisely what the Soviets wanted. In fact, the Norwegian Labor Party smuggled the politically virile Trotsky into Norway under the assumed name of Sedow. This left little doubt as to the catastrophe likely to befall Britain's closest Scandinavian neighbor. Quisling did everything possible within the law to have the ghetto-revolutionary thrown out of Norway but failed due to the government having invited him in the first place. What followed was one of the most audacious acts of anti-subversion ever mounted in peacetime. Agents attached to *Nasjonal Samling*, without Quisling's knowledge, tapped Trotsky's phones, infiltrated his circle, spied on the revolutionary and his entourage, and even burgled their homes.

Distraught at the appalling likely consequences of what he called the "brothers war" between Britain and Germany Quisling had intervened a month after England declared war on its European neighbor. He telegraphed the British Prime Minister Chamberlain proposing that on British initiative a union of European nations be formed. His secretary and biographer Franklin Knudsen wrote: "A few weeks later he had ready a detailed draft for cessation of hostilities and a proposal for re-establishing peaceful relations between the brother-nations Great Britain and Germany."

As Knudsen surmises, "If Quisling had had any desire to exploit the confusion of the world war and to seize power himself by the aid of foreign bayonets, he would have done exactly the reverse, *viz.*, lulled the people into a still more profound sleep, and one day confronted it with an accomplished fact."

On October 11, 1939, after Poland's attacks on Germany had been repulsed and German territory ceded to Poland in 1918 recovered, Vidkun Quisling sent an urgent telegram to British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain:

Having in 1927 to 1929 been charged with the task of attending to the British interests in Russia, I take the liberty of addressing myself to your Excellency being aware, of expressing the opinion of nearly all in the Nordic countries, when saying that the brothers' war between Great Britain and Germany, with Bolshevism as a *tertius gaudens*, is being felt in an especially tragic degree in our countries, that are so closely related to Great Britain as well as to Germany.

Your declaration of September 30, 1938, concerning the relations between Great Britain and Germany, and their vital importance to the peaceful development of Europe, made a strong impression here, and we are convinced that what is in question today is to save Europe and civilization through peace with Germany in the spirit of your declaration.

The only positive way to achieve this is to fuse British, French, and German interests into a European Confederation on the initiative of Great Britain, in order to create a community of interests and co-operation, beneficial to all parties. Under these circumstances, and in view of the sufferings, which the war is causing also to the neutral Nordic countries, I deferentially appeal to your immense authority and responsibility, and beg to suggest that the British government—in accordance with the test-

ed methods of federalization in America, South Africa and Australia—invite every European state to choose 10 representatives to a congress charged with the task of preparing a constitution for an empire of the European nations, to be submitted to a plebiscite in each country for acceptance or rejection....

You are the only statesman who, under present circumstances, can bring Europe back to peace and reason.

—Quisling, C.B.E.
Formerly Norwegian Minister of Defense

This telegram was cordially acknowledged to which Quisling afterward said: "I received a friendly message of thanks, but otherwise I heard nothing more about the matter."

Alarmed at the emerging evidence that Britain and France intended to attack Norway, Sweden and Finland, Hitler on December 27 gave explicit orders to prepare comprehensive plans for the defensive occupation, or if too late a strategy to throw the English cuckoo out of the Norwegian nest.

His fears were not groundless. On September 19, 1939—less than two weeks after his declaration of war against Germany—Winston Churchill, as first lord of the Admiralty, put forward the suggestion "that the British fleet should lay a mine field across the three-mile limit in Norwegian territorial waters," the intention being to intercept and stop the essential supply of Swedish ore (via Narvik) to Germany. (4) Churchill went on to bemoan the fact that having made his case the cabinet would not give their consent.

It was not until April 1940 that Churchill got his way. He dismissed any suggestion that Norway would retaliate by pointing out that Great Britain, through trade blockades, "could bring the whole industry of Norway, centering on Oslo and Bergen, to a complete standstill, in short, Norway, by retaliating against us, would be involved in economic and industrial ruin." England's swashbuckling first lord contemptuously dismissed suggestions that Germany would retaliate.

Another "cunning plan" of the ever-belligerent Winston was to declare *de facto* war on Norway, Sweden and Finland. This strategy was drawn up on February 5, 1940 when the Allied Supreme Council of the western powers held a meeting in Paris. There it was agreed to send up to four divisions, camouflaged as volunteers, to Finland via Norway and Sweden to seize those countries' iron-ore assets. The strategy was aborted because of Sweden's stated determination to resist.

Having been denied his calamitous warlike way, Churchill, on February 16, 1940, ordered British naval forces to proceed into Norway's territorial waters and board the German freighter *Altmark*, which had prisoners-of-war on board. As Quisling had surmised, the Norwegian government turned a blind eye to Churchill's impudent two-fingered salute to their country's neutrality.

On April 8, English aggression against Norway proceeded. The Royal Navy began to mine the Scandinavian country's coastal waters; an act of war that once again blew a gaping hole in solemnly signed declarations.

Thus the mining of Norway's ports continued. British and French troops were simultaneously being mobilized to invade Norway. Their first objective was to occupy Narvik and to clear the port before advancing to the Swedish frontier. Simultaneously further troops were readied to occupy Stavenger, Bergen and Trondheim.

At a time when according to corrupt British "historians" England was supposed to be standing alone, Adolf Hitler was



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Vidkun Quisling in a car with Heinrich Himmler. Though remembered by history as the “Benedict Arnold” of Norway for his collaboration with National Socialist Germany, Quisling was a leading cultural “personality” and humanitarian for decades before World War II. He was an effective and idealistic assistant to Fridtjof Nansen, who arranged refugee aid to the throngs of Armenians who had survived the Turkish massacres of their people at the end of World War I.

hardly alone in being horrified at the English and French invasion of Scandinavia. His country's legitimate and crucial trade links with Finland would be broken in defiance of international law. Hitler was painfully aware that the invasion of his country would quickly follow. “The occupation of Norway by the British would be a strategic turning movement which would lead them into the Baltic, where we have neither troops nor coastal fortifications . . . the enemy would find himself in a position to advance on Berlin and break the backbone of our two fronts.”

Instead of the British and French arriving first and drawing the Germans out, the German armed forces reached Norway first and with remarkably few forces prevented the British and French occupation of Norway. “Consequently, we were out of the running, and for all that, it was we who had taken the initiative in the operations,” admitted France’s Paul Reynaud. France’s General Gamelin disconsolately agreed: “The intention had been to entrap their opponent (Germany) by provoking him into making a landing in Norway.” It had gone disastrously wrong; they had been beaten to it by Hitler. Churchill himself reluctantly conceded that “The Norwegian government at the time was chiefly concerned with the activities of the British.”

Undeterred, Churchill persisted in his aim to occupy Norway, with Trondheim being the obvious choice; there were only 2,000 German troops stationed in the coastal town, who would be little match for 13,000 British troops. The British Army was, however, routed during their encirclement and badly mauled. The remnants were evacuated by May 1.

More to save face than from any realistic chance of seizing neutral Sweden’s iron-mines, the British mobilized 20,000 troops and put them ashore at Narvik. Embarrassingly they too

were routed by 2,000 Austrian Alpine troops supported by as many sailors again from the German destroyers based at Narvik. At this stage of the war, Germany, which had so far merely protected its borders against Anglo-French aggression, retaliated against its tormentors. The numerically fewer and more lightly equipped German Army overran France. Three hundred thirty-eight thousand allied troops, mostly British, retreated through northern France, most of whom were rescued on the express orders of the conciliatory Adolf Hitler. Along the Norwegian coastline the remnants of Churchill’s defeated British Army in Norway were simultaneously evacuated.

Everything that Vidkun Quisling had warned against had turned out precisely as he had predicted. Rarely has a country suffered the ignominy of bearing the charge: “I told you so.” Quisling stood vindicated. Interestingly, the then Norwegian government, like today’s Labour Party activists, was selectively pacifist. Just as in England there are government ministers who once supported the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Quisling recalled a Norwegian apparatchik sitting on the military committee whilst wearing the “broken rifle” emblem on his lapel. He became the minister of defense. Quisling wondered what these “warriors” would do now to defend Norway’s interests.

Even Quisling’s most vociferous opponents agreed on the point of Norway’s lamentable lack of preparation. Major O.H. Langeland, a vociferous opponent, wrote: “Never has a people embarked on a war under a government that was so incompetent and so totally incapable of understanding the nature of war as the Nygaardsvold government.”

Such was the Norwegian parliamentary party's incompetence, betrayal and treachery that in order to save their own skins when the postwar inquest arrived they had little hesitation in placing the blame on the 100,000 of their fellow countrymen who had joined Quisling's *Nasjonal Samling* Party.

Overnight the German armed forces consolidated their hold on Norway and set up a protective coastal cordon to thwart Anglo-French incursions. In Oslo itself the Norwegian authorities had evaporated like spring snow leaving only the police to cope with the invasion. It was at this stage that a representative of the German government named Scheidt and an old acquaintance, Hagelin, approached Quisling in his hotel room at the Astoria. The situation was made painfully clear. In a word, resistance was useless and at this stage could only come from guerrilla bands as all defense establishments had surrendered. The obvious was stated; continuation of the conflict would be catastrophic for Norway.

Overall the capitulation was peaceful and uneventful. The city of Oslo surrendered and thousands of curious Norwegians stood calmly along the pavement to witness the surprisingly low-key troop movements. Hitler despised victory celebrations. Knudsen says he saw one elderly lady spat in a German soldier's face. He simply wiped the spittle off with the back of his hand and smiled.

At 1 p.m. Quisling completed his walk of contemplation and accompanied by Knudsen and Scheidt set off for the War Office. Once there, he was recognized and saluted; he had of course been Norway's minister of defense for two years, in these same offices.

The authorities had vanished; no one knew what had happened. The general staff had evacuated during the night. It was later discovered they had retreated to a small hotel outside Oslo where they had mobilized a hearty breakfast.

Sadly it was not to be partaken of. Just as these stalwarts were about to tuck in, a German plane came flying over the suburb of Holmenkollen, and the entire general staff ran for their cars and disappeared. They left only their caps, shoulder belts, overcoats, portfolios and, of course, their breakfasts.

Having secured German agreement to consider the War Office as sacrosanct, Quisling ordered the destruction of all documentation that might aid the German armed forces. He then endeavored to discover where Norway's government had gone. He did manage to contact a colonel at Elverum, who informed him that the government was on the point of fleeing to Sweden.

Quisling was quite certain that this must be prevented; its government and the authorities could not abandon Norway. In Oslo there were already signs of panic. Vidkun Quisling, ever the pragmatist, took the only available course open to him, an equally realistic decision that was taken during the German occupation of Guernsey and other soft targets.

The German objective had been reached: the military denial of Norway to their English and French tormentors. It had never been their intention, borne out by events, of bringing bloodshed to their peaceful European neighbor. Furthermore the Germans had no wish whatsoever to interfere in the administration of the land of Norway.

There was anger that the German battleship *Blucher* had been sunk with heavy loss of life, and a feeling for revenge in the form of armed aggression prevailed. This, however, was pre-

vented on the express orders of Adolf Hitler.

The only remaining political party in Norway, *Nasjonal Samling*, was invited to administer the country's affairs. Taking off his jacket Quisling set to work. His first intention was to broadcast a national appeal for calm. His doing so prevented much loss of life. At 7.32 p.m. Vidkun Quisling made this speech from Oslo's radio station:

Norwegian men and women! England having violated the neutrality of Norway by laying minefields in Norwegian territorial waters, without encountering any other resistance than the usual flimsy protests from the Nygaardsvold government, the German government has offered the Norwegian government its help, accompanied by a solemn declaration that Germany will respect our national independence and Norwegian lives and property. As a reply to this offer, which would provide a solution to the untenable situation in which our country finds itself, the Nygaardsvold government has ordered a general mobilization with the instructions that all Norwegian military forces are to oppose the Germans by armed force.

The government itself has fled, having recklessly gambled with the fate of our country and its inhabitants. Under these circumstances, it is the duty and the right of the national unity movement to take possession of the power of government, in order to vindicate the vital interests of the Norwegian people and the safety and independence of Norway. By the virtues of circumstance and of the national aims of our movement, we are the only people who can do this and thereby save the country from the desperate situation into which the party politicians have brought our people. The Nygaardsvold government has withdrawn. The national government has assumed power with Vidkun Quisling as head of government and minister for foreign affairs....

Of course, the proclamation hit like a bomb. Knudsen described his congratulating Quisling on his new role as prime minister of Norway. "He smiled—somewhat sadly I thought—and said: 'It surely is no position to aspire after. Let us hope, however, that the Germans understand our objectives.'" Was Quisling the puppet claimed by the vengeful victors? The evidence suggests otherwise. Norway's new prime minister insisted on considerable autonomy—more so than did for instance the authorities on England's German-occupied Channel Islands, who were never denounced as traitors.

The first sign of Quisling's independent spirit was shown when Reich Minister Brauer asked Quisling to visit him. The prime minister declined saying that on the contrary, Brauer must come to see him. On this occasion Quisling presented his list of government ministers, rather embarrassingly handwritten on a hotel letter heading. This at least put the lie to the allegation that *Nasjonal Samling* was part of a pre-arranged plot. If that had been the case then the new government of ministers, some even then in remote regions of the country, would never have been appointed "on the hoof." They would have been already appointed and standing in the wings.

It was Quisling who ordered the evacuation of German troops from his country's parliament, while the illegitimate Nygaardsvold regime (through unconstitutional extension of its mandate) was abandoning its country and people. It was Vidkun Quisling who by various directives saved many Norwegian lives.

The claim that Quisling was Germany's imposed puppet is wide of the mark. Whilst the *Nasjonal Samling*'s leader was

indeed prime minister, it was *Amrsleiter* (head of department) Scheidt and president of the Board of Trade, Hagelin, who autonomously negotiated with the German authorities.

Quisling's principal role was to provide responsible civilian rule thus denying the need for military dictatorship. His first aim was to ensure political and social stability and through proper defense to deter British and French aggression. It was assumed that adequate defensive fortifications would be in place prior to German withdrawal and the re-establishment of Norway's neutral status. Had Quisling been listened to in the years leading up to England's war against Germany and Scandinavia then of course British and then German invasion would have never occurred.

The new government earned the guarded approval of industry's official representatives and ironically, the spontaneous and total support of the trade unions. Prior to their executive committees fleeing the country, *Nasjonal Samling* had been a thorn in the side of the socialists, but now, abandoned by them, Norway's workers became enthusiastic for their new government.

The press also promised Quisling their support. After a statement to the Oslo press, the editor in chief of Norway's equivalent to the *Times* or *New York Times* wrote supportively. He said that for many years he had been one of Quisling's most consistent opponents, but after what had happened, he was convinced that there was only one course open to the nation, and that was the one which Quisling's new government had made possible.

Every newspaper loyally quoted all the press releases Quisling forwarded. They were not compelled to do so; the new government did not possess the means to compel anyone to do anything against their wishes. In effect whilst Quisling responsibly administered the country's needs, the German authorities, who considered Quisling "a bothersome fellow," merely provided for the country's defense against England.

Unlike Britain's whip system of government, none of the Quisling government's ministers or functionaries was coerced; each was given the free choice, to serve or not to do so. It is interesting to note that all functionaries were requested to dispose of all documents that might fall into German hands.

Throughout Norway settled a blissful calm except for one tumultuous day when Quisling was alarmed to see mass panic in Oslo. Tens of thousands of people were fleeing for their lives, even hijacking vehicles; anything to reach safety. On that ill-famed aptly named "panic day" tens of thousands spent the freezing night in the woods surrounding Oslo. The reason? Rumor had it that British warships were lying out in the fjord and were going to bombard Oslo on the stroke of 12 noon. The rumor was likely fuelled by a British broadcast aimed at giving the impression that Britain had allowed the Germans to successfully invade, so that the Royal Navy could blockade and confine Germany's troops. Acceptance of their position was universal and largely supportive throughout Norway. Certainly the fleeing Nygaardsvold regime was condemned without exception and in scenes that would undoubtedly have been echoed had England been invaded, the Norwegian people set out to make the best of things.

People, especially those in authority, did everything possible to ingratiate themselves with the Germans, offering assistance and advice. The German legation was actually besieged by

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Norwegians wishing to assist the Germans and Oslo's local government was nothing if not enthusiastic in carrying out nightly repairs to the Fornebu airport which was being bombed by Britain's Royal Air Force. For their part the German authorities kept Quisling informed as to those who were conspiring to oust him. There were several separate and parallel plans to remove Quisling, one of which was to succeed.

Quisling for his part applied himself to getting the country running again. Previously Norway's industry was disproportionately dependent upon Britain. Overnight, entire industries closed down, as did the banks. Thousands of workers found themselves without the means to make a living. Churchill's boast to bring Norway's economy to destruction looked certain but was again thwarted by Quisling. With enormous drive and energy he brought Norway's entire economic and social administration back to work. Perversely it was Quisling's independent spirit that led to his being removed from office. His relationship with Minister Brauer had always been abrasive; the Reich's appointee resented playing second fiddle to Quisling. Furthermore the Germans were great believers in realpolitik and the more Machiavellian Brauer had succeeded in convincing the German High Command that an alternative government to Quisling's had been assembled. This *Administrasjonsrad* would be far more compliant to German demands and furthermore it had the unequivocal support of the king, who had refused to recognize the Quisling government. This was a realpolitik that the Germans could not refuse.

Quisling was furious and in a angry confrontation with the German appointed puppet-president of the newly formed *Administrasjonsrad* he exclaimed: "You have these 30 years

been walking about acting [the] patriot and friend of the military defense of Norway, and now it becomes evident that you are willing to take over the government on German terms, which I had rejected in contempt. You have made yourself a vile hostage in the hands of the Wehrmacht. You will be forced to join in the plundering of our people, and when it is finished your new task-masters will throw you out of office. It will be well deserved." Events turned out precisely as Quisling predicted.

Within days it became clear that Norway's *Administrasjonsrad* had lied and did not have the king's blessing and was unable to govern in the way the Germans had wanted. It was immediately dissolved, the occupied Norwegian territories were placed under a *Reichskommissar* and Norway found itself under direct military rule. The Reich's new *kommissar* was Terboven, and for the first time the swastika rather than the Norwegian national flag flew over Parliament House.

Hitler had allowed himself to be ill advised by the deceitful Brauer and his fellow conspirators. He was ruthlessly pragmatic. The hapless German appointee, Brauer, delirious with pride, flew to Berlin on April 16. A week later he was demoted to common soldier and posted to the Western Front. Rumor has it (by 1967) that Brauer had been absorbed into the Soviet apparatus as an advisor to the inspectorate of recruitment.

With less freedom than that enjoyed by the occupied Danes, a freedom likely to have been equaled in Norway had Quisling's more benign administration not been sabotaged by Brauer, Norway's infrastructure nevertheless hit the ground running. Industry was accelerating at such a pace that it was afterwards mockingly said that the Norwegians were profiteers by day and patriots during the evening.

Quisling meanwhile was politically sidelined. Terboven informed him that unless he resigned as leader of *Nasjonal Samling* it would be declared an illegal organization. Vidkun Quisling did fly to Berlin, hoping to lay the situation before the Fuehrer, but those who had an interest in maintaining Terboven's position prevented the meeting from immediately taking place and Quisling was "otherwise occupied." Resting in a small hotel on the outskirts of Berlin, the

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days turned into weeks giving Terboven the space needed to consolidate his hold.

Finally the meeting with the German leader took place and was to last several hours. There, Quisling was given the opportunity to properly recount events, which he did without throwing Terboven to the wolves.

Hitler, understandably upset at Norway's prewar treachery that had left his beloved Germany exposed to Baltic invasion, pointed out that Norway had no right to anything "after the pro-English policy she had been pursuing."

The Fuehrer then smiled and added ruefully: "It is a strange irony of fate that we should be waging war against the two countries, for which, all my life, I have had the most sympathy, namely, Norway and England."

Hitler spoke quietly, saying that he could not make any changes to the conditions of occupation but would consider, as soon as conditions allowed, Norway's craving for liberty. He also reminded Quisling that if England's invasion had made occupa-

tion inevitable then better for the people of Norway that the occupiers be German rather than English. The Fuehrer had bitter memories of the English as occupiers. To underline his point the Fuehrer added that had it not been for the German occupation, the Soviet Union, aided by England, would have certainly pursued its claim to access to the Atlantic. The implication was clear; it was hardly in Norway's interests to be occupied by the Red Army. It was an irresistible argument.

The meeting ended with Quisling being afforded every facility for continuing his work, and working within a Norway enjoying considerable autonomy within a Germanic Europe. The German leader was set in his mind that never again would the offshore prodigal son, England, threaten Europe.

Subsequently Quisling remained on the sidelines in the belief that doing so gave him the best opportunity of engaging and ousting Terboven's *Administrasjonsrad*. Adolf Hitler was personally involved in negotiations aimed at providing Norway with a multi-party administration with *Nasjonal Samling* under Quisling's leadership making up at least one-quarter of the proposed government. It was the Fuehrer's fervent hope that the Norwegian patriot's track record would quickly make him the dominant figure in Norwegian politics.

Such were the contenders that it was jokingly said that Norway had enough ministers to run Europe. In the event of the successful formation of Hitler's choice, the Council of the Kingdom, Quisling's *Nasjonal Samling* was accorded one-third of the new parliament's seats, but he himself was not made a member of the government. At least his work for the reconstruction of Norway, though now compromised by the intervening period, could begin.

Was Vidkun Quisling a National Socialist? Decidedly not, for in fact it was his and Knudsen's almost English (establishment) negative perception of National Socialism that earned them the distrust of Berlin. Those politicians who did replace him were appointed not so much because of their affection for or understanding of Norway, but for their affection for the Third Reich and in particular National Socialism.



A Vidkun Quisling poster.

"Norge" means "Norway."

Quisling had, much to his later regret, always trusted England first and foremost. He was particularly aggrieved when, in the summer of 1940, he was deprived of his order of CBE (Commander of the British Empire). In his biography his secretary emphasized "the naked truth": "Quisling was far more pro-English than pro-German." Franklin Knudsen himself was a product of the English public school system. He had also been an acting British vice consul, hardly a role suited to a National Socialist. As late as 1938 Knudsen had collaborated with the Air Ministry in London. This was in connection with a Norwegian patent for directing torpedoes by the aid of photoelectric cells. It was hardly surprising the Gestapo suspected him of belonging to the British Secret Service.

Essentially the *Nasjonal Samling* Party was fascist inclined only inasmuch as it represented a sea change for social improvement, the elimination of class, the provision of conditions amenable to national prosperity, and a sound defensive strategy. As such it was natural that it should be vehemently opposed to communism—but then, virtually every country in Europe had, in varying degrees of success, their own *Nasjonal Samling* parties.

On May 7, 1945, Norway capitulated to the Allies, and the disintegration proceeded during which time Vidkun Quisling was ordered to present himself and his party members to the police station. He had already spurned an offer to decamp for a neutral country, Spain or South America. He preferred, however, to stand by his post and to vindicate his actions—a surprising lack of judgment for he must already have known of the vengeful extremes to which his opponents would go.

The campaign to blacken the Norwegian patriot's reputation began immediately upon his being jailed. The media that had been on friendly terms with him so recently now denounced him as "a drunken decadent bearing all the signs of excess and debauchery." Pretty good considering Quisling was a teetotaling, non-smoking acetic.

Vidkun Quisling and thousands of other jailed political hostages were systematically starved with rations as low as 700 calories a day, the normal requirement being 3,000 calories daily. In these prisons various diseases ran rampant, and neuritis, due to lack of nutrition, was common. Such was Quisling's physical condition that on at least one occasion the court had to be adjourned because he had difficulty standing.

Quisling's political activity before the occupation was a mainstay of the prosecution's case. (Defense evidence was inadmissible.) It alleged that he had:

1. Furnished Germany with military and political information;
2. That in December 1940 (three months prior to the invasion) he had procured an audience with the Norwegian businessman Hagelin, Admiral Raeder and Chancellor Adolf Hitler;
3. That by declaring illegal (which it was) the Norwegian parliament's extension of itself he had provided himself with a reason to force a *coup d'état*.

The rest was equally puerile nonsense. It was charged that Quisling would invite the Germans to occupy Norway as being preferable to being occupied by Britain, that he would incorporate Norway into a Great Germanic League. It was also



Quisling (left) with Rolf Fuglesang, general secretary of the *Nasjonal Samling* (NS), both dressed in NS "political leaders" uniform.

charged that he had convinced Adolf Hitler in 1939 of the western powers intention to invade Norway. It may have been irrelevant to such a court that it was of course true.

Finally, Quisling had charged (again quite correctly) the then illegal Norwegian government with having decided not to hinder an Allied invasion of Norway. Perversely, rarely has a prosecution so successfully managed to turn acts of great patriotism into base treachery.

It was never explained, if it was Quisling's intention to surrender his country to Germany, why his party, alone in the Norwegian parliament, had offered a solution that would guarantee Norway's continued neutrality. Nor was it ever explained, if it was Quisling's intention to surrender to German invasion (caused by England's invasion), why he had always advocated a strong defensive capability, and pushed for a strong national government, for the formation of a British-Norwegian League, and for peace between England and Germany.

As in all of the victors' show trials Quisling was allowed neither defense counsel (save one chosen for him by the state), nor defense witnesses nor defense evidence. The judge, Eric Solem, was handpicked as a veteran political opponent of the *Nasjonal Samling*'s leader. He was almost certainly Jewish. The entire legal apparatus assembled to judge Vidkun Quisling was drawn from his avowed enemies. The Norwegian patriot was inevitably sentenced to death by firing squad. ♦

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